

## Understanding Multigenerational Dynamics in E-commerce Startups

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### ABSTRACT

This research paper explores the significance of embracing multigeneration dynamics in the context of e-commerce startups. With the continuous growth of the digital landscape and the increasing diversity of the workforce, understanding and leveraging the unique strengths and preferences of different generations is crucial for the success of e-commerce ventures. "The paper delves into the challenges faced by e-commerce startups in accommodating multigenerational employees and customers, including varying communication styles, technology adoption, work-life balance expectations, and leadership styles. It also highlights the benefits of embracing multigenerational dynamics, such as knowledge sharing, innovation, collaboration, customer understanding, and succession planning. The research employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies to analyze the experiences and perceptions of multigenerational employees and customers in e-commerce startups. By examining best practices, strategies, and case studies, the paper provides practical recommendations for e-commerce startups to create inclusive and engaging online experiences that cater to diverse generations". The findings contribute to the understanding of how multigenerational dynamics can be harnessed to drive growth, innovation, and long-term success in the e-commerce industry.

### Keywords

Entrepreneurship, Startups, E Commerce, Multigeneration, diversity, Globalization, Strategy

### Introduction

"The rapid growth of e-commerce has revolutionized the way we shop, connect, and conduct business. As the digital landscape continues to expand, it is essential for e-commerce startups to recognize and embrace the multigenerational dynamics that exist among their customer base. In this essay, we will explore the significance of multigeneration in the context of e-commerce startups and discuss strategies to leverage this diversity for success".

Multigeneration refers to the coexistence of different age groups within a society. Each generation brings unique perspectives, preferences, and challenges to the e-commerce ecosystem. From tech-savvy millennials to digitally hesitant baby boomers, catering to the needs of various generations is essential for creating inclusive and engaging online experiences. User experience (UX) design lies at the heart of successful e-commerce ventures. To address multigenerational audiences, startups must prioritize intuitive interfaces, easy navigation, and accessibility features. Considering factors such as adjustable font sizes, clear instructions, and straightforward checkout processes can enhance usability for older users who may have varying levels of digital literacy.

Tailoring product recommendations based on individual preferences is a powerful strategy for engaging users of all ages. By leveraging customer data, startups can offer personalized suggestions, cross-selling, and upselling opportunities. By accounting for generational differences in tastes and interests, e-commerce platforms can create more relevant and compelling shopping experiences. Multigenerational customers place importance on the opinions of others. Integrating user-generated reviews and ratings can establish credibility and trust across different age groups. Encouraging customers of all generations to provide feedback fosters a sense of community and inclusivity, thereby strengthening brand reputation and loyalty.

"Effective customer support is crucial for e-commerce success. Recognizing that different generations have varying communication preferences, startups should offer a range of support channels such as live chat, phone assistance, email, and social media interactions. This ensures that customers can reach out for assistance in ways that align with their comfort levels, ultimately enhancing their overall experience. Social media platforms are powerful tools for reaching diverse audiences. E-commerce startups can leverage social media and influencer marketing to engage multigenerational customers effectively. Collaborating with influencers from various age groups who resonate with the target market can help bridge generational gaps and establish trust and authenticity. Providing a variety of payment options is essential when catering to multigenerational customers. While traditional payment methods remain important, incorporating digital wallets, installment plans, or Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) options can accommodate different generations' financial preferences. This flexibility enables a wider customer base to access and engage with the e-commerce platform".

Recognizing and embracing multigeneration dynamics is essential for the long-term success of e-commerce startups. By prioritizing user experience, personalization, trust-building, customer support, social media engagement, and flexible payment options, startups can create inclusive and engaging online experiences for customers of all ages. Understanding

the diverse needs and preferences of each generation will enable e-commerce startups to thrive in the ever-evolving digital landscape.

In today's modern workforce, organizations are increasingly comprised of employees from different generations, including Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. This diverse mix of multigenerational employees brings both unique challenges and significant benefits to the workplace. In this essay, we will explore the challenges and benefits associated with multigenerational employees, highlighting the importance of fostering an inclusive and collaborative environment.

Multigenerational dynamics in companies are increasingly relevant, with the workforce comprising Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. As of the update in January 2023, a significant portion of the workforce was made up of Baby Boomers who were delaying retirement, posing challenges and opportunities for knowledge transfer programs. Companies recognized that different generations had distinct work preferences, communication styles, and leadership expectations, leading to adaptations in management and communication practices.

"The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote work and technology, revealing generational differences in tech proficiency. To bridge these gaps, many companies implemented mentoring and reverse mentoring programs, with younger employees imparting digital skills and older employees sharing industry knowledge. Additionally, diversity and inclusion initiatives encompassed age diversity, while leadership development programs aimed to nurture leaders from diverse generations. Flexible work arrangements were offered to accommodate the varying needs of different generations, and multigenerational teams were recognized for their potential to enhance creativity and innovation. Understanding generational differences has also been instrumental in tailoring employee engagement and retention strategies".

#### **Challenges of Multigenerational Employees:**

1. **Communication Styles:** Multigenerational employees may have different communication styles and preferences. Baby Boomers may prefer face-to-face interactions, while younger generations are more inclined towards digital communication. These differences can lead to misunderstandings and miscommunication if not addressed effectively.
2. **Technology Adoption:** The rapid advancement of technology poses challenges for older generations who may not be as technologically proficient as their younger counterparts. Bridging the digital divide and ensuring equal access to training and resources is crucial to foster collaboration and productivity.
3. **Work-Life Balance Expectations:** Generational differences in work-life balance expectations can create tensions. Older employees may value loyalty and long working hours, while younger employees prioritize flexibility and work-life integration. Striking a balance that accommodates diverse needs can be challenging.
4. **Leadership and Management Styles:** Each generation has distinct leadership and management styles shaped by their experiences and upbringing. Conflict may arise when different generations clash due to varying expectations of authority, decision-making, and feedback.

In an organization, multigenerational employees can be broadly classified into different generations based on their birth years and shared experiences. While it's important to note that individuals within each generation can have diverse characteristics and experiences, here are the main generational cohorts commonly found in the workplace:

#### **1. Traditionalists (also known as the Silent Generation):**

- Birth Years: 1928-1945 (approx.)

- Characteristics: Traditionalists are known for their strong work ethic, loyalty, and respect for authority. They often value stability, discipline, and prefer face-to-face communication. They tend to have extensive experience and knowledge in their respective fields.

#### **2. Baby Boomers:**

- Birth Years: 1946-1964 (approx.)

- Characteristics: Baby Boomers are associated with a period of significant population growth after World War II. They tend to be hardworking, ambitious, and value professional growth. Baby Boomers often prioritize face-to-face communication and may have hierarchical expectations in the workplace.

#### **3. Generation X:**

- Birth Years: 1965-1980 (approx.)

- Characteristics: Generation X employees are often independent, adaptable, and self-reliant. They value work-life balance and seek flexibility in their careers. Generation X individuals tend to be comfortable with technology but may not be as digitally native as younger generations.

#### 4. Millennials (also known as Generation Y):

- Birth Years: 1981-1996 (approx.)

- Characteristics: Millennials are often characterized as tech-savvy, diverse, and purpose-driven. They value work-life balance, seek meaningful work, and prefer collaborative and inclusive work environments. Millennials are comfortable with technology and are often early adopters of new digital tools.

#### 5. Generation Z:

- Birth Years: 1997-2012 (approx.)

- Characteristics: Generation Z represents the newest entrants into the workforce. They are digital natives, having grown up with technology at their fingertips. Generation Z employees tend to be entrepreneurial, creative, and have a strong desire for social impact. They value flexibility and diverse career opportunities.

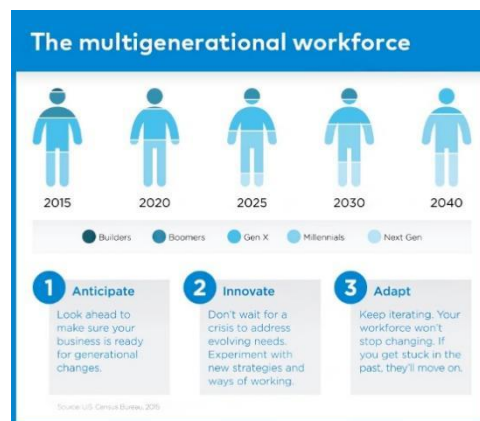


Fig source <https://www.slalom.com>

Understanding the generational diversity within an organization can help promote effective communication, collaboration, and synergy. Recognizing the unique strengths, perspectives, and preferences of each generation can foster a more inclusive and productive work environment. It is important to remember that these generational classifications are broad generalizations, and individual experiences and characteristics may vary within each generation. The multigenerational workforce faces several challenges that organizations need to address to foster a harmonious and productive work environment. Here are some common challenges faced by a multigenerational workforce:

**Communication Styles:** Different generations may have varying communication styles and preferences. Traditionalists and Baby Boomers may prefer face-to-face or phone conversations, while younger generations like Millennials and Generation Z may rely more on digital communication channels such as email or instant messaging. Bridging the gap in communication preferences can lead to misunderstandings and inefficiencies if not properly managed.

**Technology Adoption:** Generational gaps in technology adoption and digital literacy can pose challenges. Older employees may be less familiar with new technologies, software applications, and digital tools, while younger employees tend to be more tech-savvy. Organizations need to provide adequate training and support to ensure all employees can effectively use the technology required for their roles.

**Work-Life Balance Expectations:** Each generation has different expectations and priorities regarding work-life balance. Baby Boomers may prioritize career advancement and longer working hours, while younger generations may value flexibility, work-life integration, and a better work-life balance. Balancing these diverse expectations can be a challenge for organizations.

**Leadership and Management Styles:** Different generations have distinct leadership and management styles influenced by their experiences and upbringing. Traditionalists and Baby Boomers may have a more hierarchical approach to leadership, while younger generations tend to prefer collaborative and participative leadership styles. Harmonizing these styles and ensuring effective communication between different generations is crucial.

**Stereotypes and Bias:** Stereotypes and biases based on age can create friction and hinder collaboration within a multigenerational workforce. Preconceived notions about capabilities, attitudes, and work ethics can lead to misunderstandings, lack of trust, and decreased teamwork. Overcoming age-related stereotypes is essential for creating an inclusive and respectful work environment.

**Knowledge Transfer and Succession Planning:** As older employees retire, organizations face challenges in knowledge transfer and succession planning. Transferring the institutional knowledge and expertise of experienced employees to younger generations can be a complex process. Organizations need to implement effective strategies to capture, document, and share knowledge, ensuring a smooth transition of skills and responsibilities.

**Bridging Generational Differences:** Each generation has unique values, expectations, and preferences shaped by their life experiences. Bridging the gap between different generations and fostering a sense of understanding, respect, and collaboration is essential for creating a cohesive and high-performing multigenerational workforce.

Addressing these challenges requires organizations to implement strategies such as mentoring programs, training initiatives, flexible work arrangements, open communication channels, and fostering a culture of respect and inclusion. By actively acknowledging and managing the challenges, organizations can harness the diverse strengths of multigenerational employees and create a dynamic and thriving work environment.

### **Literature Review**

“In his investigation of numerous generations of bank employees, Weston (2001) emphasised the need of leaders comprehending the differences between them and assessing the ways in which they function in order to tap into their collective creativity and vigour. People have historically been kept apart by a chain of older employees and supervisors, followed by a younger group of employees, but today's banking organisations are more flat, allowing different teams to collaborate and express their needs and complaints. Additionally, they are allowed to express their opinions collectively”.

According to Ulrich (2001), Calhoun, and Strassor (2005), there are several potential for misunderstandings and conflict as a result of poor communication, work ethics, and evaluation of problem-solving strategies employed by diverse personnel working as a team. When there are discrepancies in the opinions of this intergenerational workforce, there will be discontent, misunderstanding, and diminished productivity, according to Weingarten (2009). Due to a lack of worker interest, group ideas would conflict, employee absenteeism would grow, group morale would suffer, and communication failures would occur. Banks should utilise their leadership skills and innovative techniques to understand and address the expectations of these various workforces.

“Research on intergenerational diversity was undertaken by Vijayalakshmi (2013), who also suggested a number of retention strategies and the necessary changes that an organisation must make in order to retain top-notch employees. It was found that these diverse workforces perform both as an individual and as a unit with a wealth of shared information and experience, which has an impact on their opinions, attitudes, values, and behaviours. These employees are valuable resources for the company. 15 The work environment has undergone a complete revolution in terms of manpower. The three generations now employed are Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Z. Understanding generational differences in the workplace helps a company develop a culture that synchronises people's efforts. This can be very useful for the management in creating a healthy working relationships and build strong team”.

Filipczak (2000) defined a traditionalist as someone who values decorum and discipline and has a strong regard for established standards and authority. Although they are now steady, systematic, devoted, and professionals, they used to struggle with change and uncertainty. Traditionalists, according to Raines' (2003) elaboration of the term, are hesitant to learn new things, accept new technologies, or challenge the status quo. They are also uneasy in contentious circumstances and prefer to keep their distance when they disagree. Nonetheless, they are the generation with the most modern-day experience. 25 Niemiec (2000) identified traditionalist qualities and observed that while traditionalists, the oldest generation presently working at an organisation, are conservative, more conscientious, and cognizant of their convictions, they are colliding with newer generations.

According to Kersten (2002), traditionalists desire respect and like formality. They prefer top-down structure and depend heavily on earlier judgements. They are expected to be punctual and neat at work, yet they are resistant to technology advances. They want hierarchical organisational structures based on competent leadership and a nostalgic attitude.

“Mask (2007) asserts that traditionalists value their spoken word highly and adhere to it. They have a reputation for being the most dependable, dedicated, and loyal workers, and they also show a high level of risk aversion. On the other side, traditionalists are frequently worried and upset by technological advancement and are opposed to any other changes. Particularly when it comes to jobs, they typically need some time to accept and adjust to any kind of change. They place

a high value on participating in meaningful face-to-face debates and social interaction. The Traditionalists, according to Kane (2009), saw a job as having an inherent prestige and sense of discipline. This "silent generation" loves education and is usually displeased when they feel that management or others do not value their opinions".

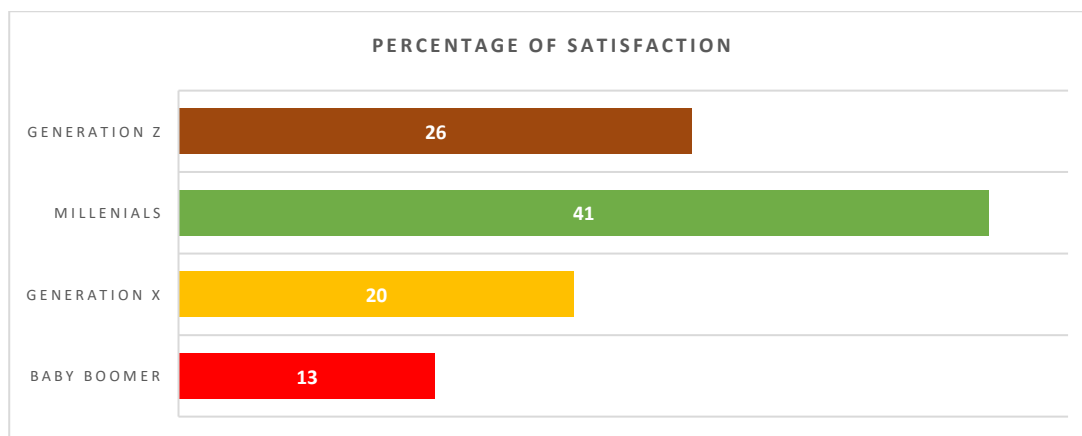
The year 2000 (Kupperschmidt) According to health care workforce studies, effective managers must be aware of generational disparities in their workforce and offer each employee with the opportunity to contribute to the organization's success. After determining what motivates its employees, a company may provide attractive services to engage and reward them. Benefits, career opportunities, the working environment, and the company as a potential employer are just a few examples. Any generational differences in work values will result in differences in the motivations of that age group (Penna & CIPD, 2008). Generational competency must be a crucial component of a company's human capital strategy if it wishes to maintain a competitive edge through improved personnel management.

"Ceridian, 2005a. HR professionals will need to actively manage cross-generational misunderstanding in the coming years (Penna & CIPD, 2008). Generational synergy will be the only method to provide a work environment 56 that supports engagement, motivation, leadership, and communication, making multigenerational diversity vital to investigate, assess, and grasp. In a survey conducted by Kelly Services Limited<sup>3</sup>, nearly 100,000 people in 30 countries, including more than 28,000 in Asia Pacific, were polled on generational differences, and it was discovered that a clear understanding of multigenerational diversity may lead to increased attraction and retention of talent, as well as improved employee engagement. This might provide the organisation a broader view on succession planning and leadership development. In order to be generationally relevant leaders today, managers must not only adjust their leadership and communication strategies to their target audiences, but also work to change habits and expectations (Gelbtuch & Morlan, 2015). In 21st-century business settings where project management is the rage, project managers may find that developing and ultimately mastering generational competence helps them better understand "what" team members are doing (behaviours) and "why" (underlying beliefs and attitudes). As a result, they will be more equipped to lead a team with a mix of generations in a way that fosters respect for one another while also boosting productivity (Gelbtuch & Morlan, 2015)".

"Mannheim's theory on generations was developed at a time when societies approaching modernity experienced a weakening of kinship ties and associated roles and relationships, and faced a lack of integration of young adults in the society (Meja & Kettler, 1993). This viewed younger generations as challengers of the status quo, and the older generations as preservers of tradition (Laufer, 1971). Based on this conceptualization, the earlier work on generations in India has focused solely on intergenerational conflict's and Youth movements in India (Gangardes, 1975; Gores, 1990).

The fact that generations as a group are historically and socially conscious of their place in time is a second crucial aspect of Mannheim's thesis. Every new generation's attempt to fit into customs and social norms brought about societal change, which is how this critical consciousness came to be. "This introduces us to a key idea in the context of generational theory: generational memories. The fundamental premise of this idea is that generational units act in a specific way as a result of their shared generational memories. The ideas of a crucial era and formative events also help to explain how these collective memories evolve through time. Therefore, it is first required to clarify what generational units are in order to grasp the interactions between them at the workplace".

## Research Findings and Suggestions



“As per our research, as per above chart findings, it was evident that Millennials were the most comfortable in embracing a Multigeneration dynamics in a workplace as compared to rest. Baby Boomers were more reluctant for change as they feel it is not easy to cope up with the technological advancements and they have to depend upon someone to help them with the challenges. However, we had mixed reactions from Generation X who faced challenges of attitude and innovation in their workplace. Generation Z being a digital generation had difficulties in coping with Baby boomers.

To enable multigenerational employees to work effectively in a startup environment, here are some suggestions and recommendations:

- 1. Foster an Inclusive Culture:** Create an inclusive work culture that values and celebrates diversity. Encourage collaboration, open communication, and mutual respect among employees of all generations. Emphasize the importance of embracing different perspectives and leveraging the collective strengths of the multigenerational workforce.
- 2. Provide Cross-Generational Mentoring:** Establish mentoring programs that pair employees from different generations. Encourage knowledge sharing and mentorship opportunities where experienced employees can impart their wisdom and younger employees can offer insights into new technologies and trends. This promotes learning, professional development, and understanding across generations.
- 3. Implement Flexible Work Arrangements:** Recognize and accommodate different work-life balance expectations by offering flexible work arrangements. This can include options such as remote work, flexible hours, or compressed workweeks. Providing flexibility enables employees from different generations to balance personal commitments while maintaining productivity and job satisfaction.
- 4. Encourage Cross-Generational Collaboration:** Promote cross-generational collaboration and teamwork through project-based assignments or cross-functional teams. This allows employees to leverage their diverse skill sets and perspectives, fostering innovation and enhancing problem-solving capabilities. Encourage open dialogue and the exchange of ideas to bridge generational gaps.
- 5. Provide Technology Training and Support:** Offer technology training programs and support to employees of all generations. Ensure that everyone has the necessary skills to effectively utilize digital tools and platforms required for their roles. This levels the playing field and promotes a shared understanding of technology, reducing potential barriers between generations.
- 6. Promote Continuous Learning and Skill Development:** Encourage a culture of continuous learning and skill development. Provide opportunities for professional growth, whether through workshops, seminars, or online courses. This ensures that employees from all generations stay updated with industry trends and technologies, fostering a sense of growth and adaptability.
- 7. Facilitate Regular Feedback and Communication:** Establish a feedback-rich culture where regular communication channels are open for employees to express their thoughts and ideas. Implement regular performance reviews and feedback sessions that focus on individual development and growth. This enables employees to understand their strengths and areas for improvement, regardless of their generational background.
- 8. Emphasize Shared Goals and Values:** Highlight the shared goals and values of the organization that transcend generational differences. Foster a sense of purpose and unity by focusing on the mission, vision, and values that align employees from different generations towards a common objective. This creates a sense of belonging and unity in the startup environment.

By implementing these suggestions and recommendations, startups can effectively harness the diverse strengths of multigenerational employees. Creating an inclusive and supportive work environment enables employees from all generations to contribute their unique perspectives, collaborate effectively, and drive the success of the startup.

Few recommendation we have received while conducting the research are as follows,

Embracing multigenerational dynamics in e-commerce startups is crucial for building a successful and adaptive business. E-commerce is a rapidly evolving industry, and a diverse workforce can provide valuable insights and perspectives. Here are some strategies to harness the potential of multigenerational dynamics in your e-commerce startup:

#### **1. Customer-Centric Approach:**

- Recognize that different age groups may have distinct shopping preferences and behaviors. Use data analytics to understand these differences and tailor your e-commerce platform to meet their needs.

**2. User Experience (UX) Design:**

- Involve individuals from various generations in the design and testing of your e-commerce website or app. Ensure that the interface is user-friendly for all age groups.

**3. Digital Marketing Expertise:**

- Combine the tech-savvy skills of younger employees with the marketing and customer relationship skills of older team members to create well-rounded digital marketing campaigns.

**4. Content Creation:**

- Leverage the storytelling abilities of older employees to create compelling product descriptions and content. Younger team members can help with social media and video content targeting younger audiences.

**5. Customer Support:**

- Offer multiple channels for customer support, including online chat, email, and phone support, to accommodate the communication preferences of different generations.

**6. Cross-Training:**

- Encourage cross-training among team members of different age groups to transfer knowledge and skills. Younger employees can teach older colleagues about emerging technologies, while older employees can share industry experience.

**7. Innovation Teams:**

- Form cross-generational teams to brainstorm and develop innovative e-commerce solutions. These teams can offer diverse perspectives on trends and technologies.

**8. Feedback Loops:**

- Implement feedback mechanisms that allow customers and employees to provide input. Analyze this feedback to make continuous improvements in your e-commerce operations.

**9. Employee Resource Groups:**

- Establish employee resource groups (ERGs) or affinity groups that focus on different generations. These groups can facilitate networking, idea-sharing, and collaboration among employees.

**10. Leadership Development:**

- Create leadership development programs that emphasize diversity and inclusion. Encourage aspiring leaders from all age groups to participate.

**11. Training and Skill Development:**

- Provide opportunities for continuous learning and skill development for all employees. Ensure that employees have access to training on the latest e-commerce technologies and trends.

**12. Performance Metrics:**

- Evaluate employee performance using objective criteria that apply uniformly to all team members. Avoid age-related biases in performance assessments.

**13. Communication and Collaboration Tools:**

- Implement tools and platforms that facilitate effective communication and collaboration among employees, regardless of their age or location.

**14. Balancing Workloads:**

- Recognize that different generations may have varying preferences regarding workloads and schedules. Be flexible and accommodating to individual needs.

**15. Celebrating Diversity:**

- Celebrate the diversity of your workforce through events and initiatives that promote inclusivity and foster a sense of belonging.

Embracing multigenerational dynamics in your e-commerce startup can lead to a more resilient and innovative business. By capitalizing on the diverse experiences, skills, and perspectives of your employees, you can better meet the evolving demands of the e-commerce market and build a company that appeals to a broad range of customers”.

## Conclusion

Multigenerational employees bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the workplace. Seasoned veterans can mentor younger employees, sharing industry insights and expertise, while younger employees can offer fresh perspectives and technological savvy. The convergence of different generations fosters creativity and innovation. Diverse viewpoints and approaches lead to more comprehensive problem-solving, as each generation brings unique insights and ideas to the table. Multigenerational teams encourage collaboration and teamwork, enabling individuals to learn from one another and leverage their respective strengths. By fostering an environment that values diversity and inclusion, organizations can achieve higher levels of productivity and synergy. Multigenerational employees can provide valuable insights into different target markets. With a diverse workforce, organizations can better understand the preferences and needs of various customer segments, allowing them to tailor their products and services more effectively.

“As older employees retire, multigenerational teams facilitate smooth succession planning and knowledge transfer. Younger employees have the opportunity to learn from their experienced colleagues, ensuring the continuity of institutional knowledge. Multigenerational employees bring both challenges and significant benefits to the workplace. By acknowledging and addressing the challenges of communication, technology adoption, work-life balance, and leadership styles, organizations can create an inclusive and collaborative environment. Leveraging the benefits of knowledge sharing, innovation, collaboration, customer understanding, and succession planning allows organizations to harness the collective strengths of their multigenerational workforce, leading to enhanced productivity, creativity, and long-term success. Embracing and valuing the contributions of employees across generations is crucial in building thriving workplaces that drive growth and innovation in today's dynamic business landscape”.

In conclusion, embracing multigeneration dynamics in e-commerce startups is not only necessary but also advantageous. By recognizing and harnessing the strengths and experiences of multigenerational employees, startups can foster innovation, drive growth, and create a vibrant and successful organization in the rapidly evolving digital landscape. By valuing and leveraging the diverse talents of each generation, e-commerce startups can position themselves for continued success in a competitive marketplace.

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